New HistoricismandTransnationalismin Reclaiming Africanityin the Select Worksof Aminatta Forna

A

Synopsis

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New Historicism and Transnationalism is Reclaiming Africanity in the Select Works of Aminatta Forna

Overview

The ‘intégrant' of human persona is conditioned by their history, geography, values, morals, racial and familial ties, as well as their individual beliefs and outlooks upon life. Our body and mind express itself in the most subconscious way. One may even be unaware of the workings of the subconscious mind in their daily life. Man is not the maker or creator of himself, rather he is the consumer of information that the environment induces in his mind. It is dubious that one’s identity is individualistic as one cannot exist alone in an anti-social habitat which is tantamount to man being affected by the society, their culture and their history. The most well-knowndeterminant of identity is one’s nationality, religion and race. The lesser-known factor of identity determination is history. One tends to leave what is behind and move forward, but the present is always affected by the past. The past actions have a domineering reaction in the present.

New Historicism gives utmost importance to author’s time and condition.According to New Historicists, the themes and meanings of literature are not universal. And thus, every text exhibits an intricate accountability to its history. Thus,while studying literature, one cannot ignore the author and their history. Creation of literature might not be independent of the history of the author. Aminatta Forna, being a Sierra Leonean and a victim of dictatorship during the civil war, creates literature that give rein to her native country’s history as well as her own.Moreover, a new historicists view may open up multifaceted outlooks that might have been overlooked earlier.Thus, it is vital to note that while identity is not purelyindividualistic, it is also subjective. Since family, history, culture and many other factors may beperceived with a

different lens, there may also be different responses to it.Unlike traditional historicism, new historicism insists that all interpretations are subjectively filtered through one's own set of historically conditioned viewpoints. There is no "objective history".

According to Foucault, history is an interaction of discourses that establish anepisteme, a dominant ideology. But texts sometimes reveal a resistance to the episteme, rather than reflect it. Through the lens of New Historicism, we as readers gain a better understanding of how historical viewpoints are complicated and how they are filtered through our own epistemes. As opposed to the traditional historicism, New Historicism opensa wide scope of experiences of individuals and also tells us that we cannot know the texts separate from their historical texts.

New Historicism prioritizes viewing literature within its historical and social contexts above everything else. African communities share the Transnational and post-colonial experience of being subjugated and harassed by their white colonial masters all over the world. This statement may come as a generalized view of the impact of colonization. But it is only through the writings of various African writers we come to know about their personal experiences related to history.Thus, readers across the world of African nationality identify with the works of such writers. The readers of non-African origin but of the post-colonial origin feel the same way. The postcolonial study of these works may open an eye as to how the postcolonial experiences of different nationalities differ from each other as well as how they connect and identify with each other.

In a world plagued with globalization one cannot help but think of transnationalism. Transnationalism is an agent of globalization. One may mistake transnationalism and globalization to be the same but it is not.The essence of transnationalism is that it is a social process of migration of people to another social avenue while crossing geographic, political and

cultural borders. Transnationals once migrated are looked upon as being uprooted from their homeland but they are practitioners of their homeland cultures as well. They do so while assimilating with the host culture to which they have migrated. Transnationals operate worldwide but their mind and soul are fixated on their home nation. Forna being a transnational cannot help but talk about her home nation in her books. She also confesses that she cannot sit back and party while her fellow nationals are suffering.Thus, this transnational idea can help us understand as to why Forna moves back and forth to her homeland to serve and help the needy. Transnationality refers to the territorial, social and cultural aspects of the nations concerned. The feeling of oneness and relatable aspect that a transnational literature builds up keeps the community united in spirit.

State of Art

Aminatta Forna, a contemporary British writer has achieved much in the literary field. Her reflection of society's trauma and suffering as a consequence of chaotic and turbulent history has been prevalent in most of her works. The grievance of the Sierra Leonean population is manifested through the socio-cultural, psychological and behavioural patterns in her writings. Her major works such as *The Devil that Danced on the Waters* (2002), *The Memory of Love*(2010), *Ancestor Stones*(2006) are historical and social accounts of the author as well as the Sierra Leoneans. She grapples with the core issues of demystifying the proposed truth and unveilsthe hidden aspects of Africa. As a transnationalist, she seeks a way of redemption from her past that has left her curious. The biographical elements give us glimpses of tumultuous political scenario of Africa and in particular that of Sierra Leone, located in the West African coast.Forna records various perspectives on war and trauma and uses compassionate storytelling for its portrayal.

The pioneer of New Historicism, Stephen Greenbalt proposed that any literary work must be understood in compliance with the historical context rather than studying it in isolation. It must be looked upon as a product of multiple factors underlying the author's biography and writing style. Inspired by the Michel Foucault's idea of Marxism, New Historicism, also focuses on the decentralisation of thought that a literary text is a standalone entity. It indulges the readers and gives them a wider understanding of how a text reflects life, and if so,it is necessary to study it by keeping in mind that it is a result of author's indulgent with history, time and place. The making up of characters and their alliance to the themes is also evident of the fact that an author generates vivid characters not by the matter of chance but by a matter of social, cultural and historical background.Thus, in Aminatta Forna's works we find themes alluding to the history, culture and society of the Sierra Leoneans.The themes of war, trauma, love, memory all allude to the political turmoil that Sierra Leone had undergone during her time. She brings in the experiences of the witnesses of the civil war and discusses the destruction of bodies, minds and souls that happened during and after civil war. Colonisation had already left a scar on the African souls but civil war deepened it even more so as to state it as unimaginable.

Being a Transnational herself, she is more affiliated to the culture, people and place of her origin. The idea of Transnationalism is to differentiate it from Globalisation by stating the fact that the immigrant leaves behind the homeland not the core memories, customs, practices etc. of the homeland. They cannot dissociate themselves from their homeland and thus are dissociated in the foreign country too. They physically belong to some other place while dwelling in the conscience of their home. Aminatta is half-African and half-Scottish, since her father Mohammad Sorie Forna was a Sierra Leonean andher mother was a Scottish. She has spent her childhood years until her father's execution in Sierra Leone.And then she moved out of

her land for future prospects. It is the connection that she feels with her homeland that drives her home and not only the quest for truth of her father's execution.

Literature Review

Tracing how forms of African animism can lead to a decolonized discourse of trauma, Ryan Topper in his research article "Trauma and the African Animist Imaginary in Aminatta Forna's*The Memory of Love* and Delia Jarett-Macauley's *Moses, Citizen and Me*"(2019) explores the theme of animist realism. The element of realism in Forna's*The Memory of Love*(2010) and that of animist realism in Jarrett-Macauley's*Moses, Citizen and Me*(2005) bring out the collective trauma of the people of Sierra Leone during the civil war. It also foresees the political developments to come. Though both the novels pursue different approaches to draw upon the spiritual practices and rituals exorcising the trauma out, it also delves upon ideologies that deliver therapy somehow.Somehow, in dealing with the realist element the historical perspective is missed over here. Realism, means that the work is deeply rooted in culture and history. Since realism helps us understand that the events in the fictionalised setting is not far from reality it is also not far from history either. Therefore, history must be considered an important factor that has led to the framing of the realist but fictional setting of *The Memory Of Love*(2010). The characters bear a close resemblance to the real-life people during the time of the author. Another aspect that is dealt with alongwith realism is psychoanalysis in the research article of Mona Becker and C. Christina Sjöström "Parallel Narratives: Trauma study of two novels *The Memory Man* by Appignanesi and *The Memory of Love* by Aminatta Forna"(2024). Here the similarity and the differences in dealing with the trauma related to war and the perception on the various ways in which the war afflicted people react to the trauma of war is depicted. Inspired by Sigmund Freud and his later views on trauma in two of his works *Beyond*

the Pleasure Principle (1961) and *Moses and Monotheism*(1939), we are bound to see the literary and cultural representations of trauma in both of the novels.How one acts and behaves and what are his views and how one perceives something is the result of what one has been conditioned to. For this also we need to take into consideration the New Historicalperspective which is lacking in this paper. The psychological aspects of the war has been dealt over here. But there is scope for further observation as to what factors have conditioned the people of Sierra Leone to be numbed so much so that they are reluctant to express and share their trauma experiences. One cannot be detached from the past no matter how hard one tries and so is the case with the Sierra Leoneans. Their personality traits exhibit how trauma has been manifested in individuals. After looking at the individual as well as collective trauma in Forna's novels from the perspective of New Historicism, we shall look forward at the marginalised faction of the society i.e. the women.Yununsy Castory Ng'umbi in his paper "Reimagining Family and Gender Roles in Aminatta Forna's *Ancestor Stones*" (2017) explores the multi-dimensional experiences of women in a polygynous family. Retelling of personal history of other individuals, here in the novel *Ancestor Stones*(2006) leads Abie, the character to remember her own personal history. It also explores the gender role in the civil war afflicted Sierra Leone. The historical narrative here is narrated by the female perspective which is otherwise numbed timelessly. It also provides us with a great insight into the familial structure of Sierra Leone. The narratives by four different women gives us insight into their individual status in the war-inflicted society and their collective roles in the polygamous family structure. Here the author Yununsy Castory Ng'umbi provides us with the dynamics of family and gender roles, but to understand it more elaborately we must consider the history which is lacking here. I find it intriguing that the shared familial responsibilities amongst the co-wives in a family is actually an act of consensus. I endeavour to

find what has conditioned the women into agreeing to a polygamous family structure and give a thought as to how history has shaped their identity as a woman in the society.

Another paper that uses psychoanalysis as a tool for analysing Forna's *The Memory of Love*(2010)is "Aminatta Forna's The Memory of Love: A Chronicle of Psychological Disaster in a Post-War Context" by Dr. Alphonse Dorien[1] et al.(2024).The psychological traumas after the Civil War areexplored here. ThePsychoanalytical and New Historical approach is used to bring out the clinical as well as the socio-cultural aspects of trauma. The symptoms of PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) are seen in civilians as well as in the soldiers who were conditioned to be unsympathetic during war times. Another facet of trauma is that it is not definable, it is somewhat different in the post-colonial world. This opens up a post-structuralist discussion on trauma as well. Silence is manifested as a response to trauma which is incomprehensible to Dr. Adrian Lockheart, a British psychologist who is sent to treat people of Sierra Leone.

"Aminatta Forna: Truth, Trauma, Memory" *The Contemporary British Novel since 2000* (2017) edited by James Acheson, chapter 18 by Francoise Lionnet and Jennifer MacGregor apprise us of the stance Forna took to indulge in the political history, trauma and its memories which have been repressed and affected different types of people differently. They summarize Aminatta Forna as such:"She tackles controversial questions- guilt and complicity, individual integrity and compromise- while maintaining a balanced perspective on the causes and consequences of community breakdowns and civil conflicts."(200).

Though the lens of New Historicism is used only on the surface level or is used to analyse any one novel at a time in some of the critical works. I would venture forth to deal with three of her novels on a deeper level to work upon reclaiming Africanity. The author herself being a transnational is evident of the fact that a historical narrative in not inherent and that it has

multiple perspectives and digressions.Many critics have explored the psychological and geocriticalaspects in her writings. But I shall take a different course of action in understanding the characters build by Forna.Since all aspects of one's life is connected to one's history, it cannot be ignored. In this proposed study I shall endeavour to find the interconnectedness of history with thepersonality, actions, thoughts and being of the characters used by Forna.The cause and effect relationship between history, trauma and the psychology of the people of Sierra Leone shall be elaborated in this paper in detail, so as to uncover the nature of mankind.

The critics have indulged in analysing the works of Aminatta Forna from a peripheral point of view, but I shall go deeper to find how these stories came intobeing keeping in mind the socio-cultural and historical stance of the author.I shall deal with how the writer has come up with plots reflecting the status of Sierra Leone alluding to the effects of colonisation and civil wars. In my opinion, her works have never been dealt in the way so as to dissect and clasp out the essence of one's being,doings, sayings and one's living by drawing out the interconnection between these elements and the history.

Research Gap

The given plethora of knowledge indicates that there is much scope for further research. From my introspection and readings of various other research works, I have come to the conclusion that a wide range of critics point out the psychological aspects of war and trauma depicted in Aminatta Forna's works. I am intrigued by the fact that the reponses to political turmoil suffered by the Sierra Leone has been a major subject of the writings of the transnational Aminatta Forna. I tend to realise that the New Historicist approach will be useful in finding out why Forna was so intrigued by the history of her home country that she based the setting in Sierra Leone itself and further she doesn't step back from portraying her characters deeply rooted

in the history itself. Here the identity of the writer and the identity of the characters depicted through the plot-lines used by the writer herself is evidence of the fact that her text cannot be read in isolation and the historical background of the author plays an important role. Even though she is a transnational, this doesn't compromise her efficacy in depicting the true Africa. I shall try to throw light on all these aspects in the proposed research and see how New Historicism and Transnationalism has led to the reclamation of Africanity in the select works of Aminatta Forna. Despite extensive research on Africanity, there's a research gap in terms of understanding the contextuality of Historicism in terms of development of transnationalism in reclaiming Africanity in the works of Aminatta Forna.

Problems to beInvestigated

The study will explore the ways in which the author's history and background influence her writing. The proposed study will aim to explore the impact ofcolonization, civil wars and other political events on the mind, body and soul of Sierra Leonean community.Identity formation is majorly affected by the external factors, and in this case the tumultuous political events. The essence of Africanity is evolved in the writings of Aminatta Forna as she presents the reality of Sierra Leone and its physically and mentally damaged communities by the trauma brought about by colonization, civil wars and the autocratic regimes. The study will explore theoverlooked features of the collective as well as individual memory and trauma. Her first novel, *The Devil that Danced on The Water*(2002)is a memoir as she recollects the memory of the witnesses of the conspiracy of the execution of her father, Mohammad Forna, she aims to enlighten the world with the actual truth behind the political drama. In her other novels too, she takes a grounded approach to reality as she uncovers the unknown aspects of trauma evident in the Sierra Leoneans. Here, in this study we shall look at the psychological aspects of an

individual's identity as well as that of a community that were formed as a result of the historical chaos. We shall take a New Historicists lens to look on to something that hasn't craved for the attention of the onlookers. Transnationalism will also play a major role in reclaiming the African identity as the author herself being a transnational brings her account of being a transnational and is still being able to continue to identify with her home country. We shall study how transnationalismaffected the author's experiences and how it led her to write about what she had long left behind. We shall discuss many aspects of transnationalism that throws light on the building of literary accounts such as that of Aminatta Forna.

Aims and Objectives of the Study

This study will delve deep into the novels of Aminatta Forna and widen the scope of historical narratives as they will help us in knowing how she has reclaimedthe African identity. This we will do by using "New Historicism" and"Transnationalism". Aminatta Forna explores the idea that colonial practices and politics have led to the loss of innocent lives. It had caused African to suffer generations after generational. It is an attempt to decolonize the mind.In this perspective, the proposed study attempts are:

- to explore the use of New Historicism and Transnationalism inreclaiming the Africanidentity,
- to investigate the heterogeneity of ideas and thoughts related to war, trauma and memory,
- to identify the impact of colonialism and wars in the African works such as that of Aminatta Forna,
- to have a comparative study on how trauma is perceived by the post-colonial country and how it is projected in the western school of thought,
- to analyse how trauma is manifested into the lives of the people of Africa,

- to find out how the characters, have been integrated with the situations around them,
- to find out how the characters allude to the individual history and the political history,to analyse the plot of the works of Aminatta Forna by drawing out the similarities from author's own life,
- to dwell upon the factors that could have led the author to build plots richly steeped in history.

Hypothesis

The hypothesis of the present study is to elucidate how New Historicism, Modernism, Post Modernism, Post Colonialism are addressed in dialogue with Africanity in transnational contexts in the novels *The Devil that Danced on the Water*(2002), *The Ancestor Stones*(2006), *The Memory of Love*(2010). The hypothesis posits that all the novels selected will reveal and result in the appearance of trans local or trans African cultural space acting beyond the already historical pan-African level, operating the African national identities, even beyond the geographical constructs of Africa. It is expected that the exploration will bring out the concept of the glocal – as an identity of synthesis rather a postmodern identity construct based on historicity.

Globalisation processes intensification of transnational spaces, trans-societal and trans-cultural spaces unfolding a multidimensional, polycentric society which heralds an identity of synthesis whereby black communities across time and geographical spaces, across Atlantic reaffirm their feelings of belonging, reconstructing their Africanity before the invasion of the global and the glocal into their lives.

Ultimately, the present study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the complexities of the relationship between History and Race intended as a cultural construct,

beyond it's possible biological reality.It is in this view that concept of race is symbolically re-elaborated in the light of history and culture.

Tools to be Used

The proposed study is to be one under the Faculties of Humanities, so the tools to be used are Books, Journals,excerpts from Interviews, Magazines, Articles,Internet etc. Besides the sources dealing with the writing of Aminatta Forna, the critical reviews of scholars and other writers will also be sought. Close reading of the novels by Aminatta Forna will also be done to critically analyse them in conforming with the study of the topic.

Research Methodology

The present research is an academic research based on the use of memory, New Historicism, Transnationalism and affirmation of the African identity in the post-colonial era. We will look into the forums of history through the memory of the eye witnesses of the history of that time. Thus, we will take a historical approach and deal with it in a descriptive manner.The historical method attempts to trace the political grievances of the war era in the post-colonial times as well as the emotion and trauma related to it. The historical aura created by the author takes the readers deep into the realms of the African society and feel their grievances to the core.

Another technique that must be used in analysing the works of Aminatta Forna is thecritical approach by various writers. So, the methodology may involve looking at the works of the author concerning Africanity with all possible dimensions. In order to achieve a comprehensive study of the African identity, memory, Transnationalism and New Historicism in the novels of Aminatta Forna, the study will analyse the themes, the plot and the style

extensively. Eventually the historical, political, descriptive, analytical and the critical study methods help usto explore the cultural and social changes and it will also lead to the understanding of African identities on a much larger level.

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study lies in the fact that the history of Africans has resulted in their identity formation. Their suffering during the colonial and civil war era have affected their past, present and also their future. We will deal with the aforesaid prospects in this study.The study will also deal with the contribution of Aminatta Forna in creating African consciousness amongst her readers so as to bring the suffering of the subaltern to the reality. Aminatta Forna's aim in all of her works is to bust the myth surrounding African identitiesmisrepresented by various writers. She uses the historical narrative in both fictional and non-fictional settings to cultivate the reader's curiosity.The close resemblance of the fictional settings with that of Africa and of the fictional characters with the representation of the Africans symbolize and reveal their true grievances for the world to know.History and Transnationalism is closely embedded in the novels and embarks upon the post-colonial experience of the Africans as well as the diasporic experience of Aminatta Forna herself.

Relevance to thePresent-day ProblemandtheContributiontoExistingKnowledge

The present study highlights the need to study post-colonial or diasporic literature so as to know the grievances of the marginalized and create awareness among the students. Socially the transnationals feel isolated as well as more connected to their homeland when they recount the memories related to it. Isolated in the sense that they try to fit in to the rest of the world owing to trend of Globalization. They feel a sense of connection all the time with their native land. Their true identity lies in the history that they have faced which they have heard in the oral form from

their ancestors. The study will deal with the problems surrounding the myth that the dominant literary canon has framed.It is to demystify the myth about the African culture and identity. Amanatta Forna's writings aim at giving a true picture of the African society, politics and culture.

The researcher believes that this research will lead to further future studies in this genre and will have a profound impact on the development of identity, study of politics and history.The voice of the minority groups and also individuals such as that of AminattaForna will never be lost or forgotten but it will continue to enlighten the readers of the world upon matters concerning African identity and culture which have been often ignored.

Plan of the work

The envisioned division of the thesis into chapters in the following way:

Chapter1:Introduction

Chapter2: Literature Review

Chapter 3:Theorising Transnationalism, New Historicism and Africanity

Chapter4:Contextualising Transnationalism and New Historicism in*The Devil that Danced on the Water*

Chapter5:Analysing and Demystifying Africanity in*Ancestor Stones*

Chapter6:Colonization and Identity: The Study of the Quest for Reclaiming Africanity in *The Memory of Love*

Chapter7: Conclusion

Select Bibliography

Chapter 1: Introduction

The colonialization of the mind has led into the false assumption that the subalterns, the colonized, the men and women of colour, the oriental are all uncivilized and barbaric.Such an assumption has led to their suffering, degradation, ill-treatment, abuse and many more. In this way when we look at the history of the colonized countries and how they have been affected by it the truth unfolds dimensionally. We see that the result of civil war had far reaching consequences. The exploitation of the minority has brought trauma, memory and a sense of loss of identity among them. The war-related trauma and consequences is deeply embedded in the subaltern minds. These traumas and experiences are shared across generations to come and generations to go through the oral narrative and collective memory of the ancestors.History opens a door to the memory which ought to be recounted so that the suffering of the innocent must not be forgotten. Moreover, when a minority like Aminatta Forna speaks up for her own experiences of her native place i.e. Sierra Leone she does so in the form of historical and cultural narratives and stories. In an interview with the thirdcultureafricans.com she says that identity is not tantamount to the places but it is the stories that define us. The stories that we hear from our grandparents or our extended family form our beliefs and cultures and it is through them that the identity of an individual is framed.

Also, in the world of globalization and transnationalism, where many leave their nations either as a compulsion or by choice, the feeling of longings for return to the motherland is prompt.Aminatta confesses that even if she stays away from her homeland she cannot stay away

from her own country, it's people and their issues and problems and it grieves her heart if she does so.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Aminatta Forna's works have been seen from various perspectives. The most common critiques of her works include critiquing from psychoanalytical point of view wherein the critics like Dr. Alphonse Dorien Makosso[1] et al. in "Aminatta Forna's *The Memory of Love*: A Chronicle of Psychological Disaster in a Post-War Context"(4 April, 2023)discover how in her works the Sierra Leoneans suffer from PTSD, what are the symptoms they exhibit and how the trauma related to war has resulted in their pathetic situation. Trauma, here gains a post-structuralist approach as this study demystifies the western concepts of trauma.

The feminist perspective on war and trauma is brought out in *Ancestor Stones* (Forna,2006).And, a historical narrative helps us understand the situation of women during those tumultuous times.Thus, Yununsy Castory Ng'umbi in his paper "Reimagining Family and Gender Roles in Aminatta Forna's *AncestorStones"* (2017)rightfully depicted the status of women in a male-dominated society.This article has proved essential in pointing out that women too are part of the society and their existence must not be ignored. It is important to remember that the society be it African or of any other place it has to be a female-inclusive society.

Another aspect that has been predominantly reflected in *The Memory of Love* (Forna,2010) is that of realism. It has been dealt with in two studies:"Trauma and the African Animist Imaginary in Aminatta Forna's *The Memory of Love* and Delia Jarett-Macauley's *Moses, Citizen and Me*"(Ryan Topper,2019) and "Parallel Narratives: Trauma Relationality, and Dissociation in Psychoanalysis and Realist Fiction" (Mona Becker and C. Christina Sjöström,2024). These two works have compared Forna's *Memory of Love*(2010) with Delia

JarettMacauley's*Moses, Citizen and Me*(2005)and with Lisa Appignanese's *The Memory Man*(2004). These two articles have used comparative study to analyse the realist aspect of the work *The Memory of Love*(2010). I agree with Ryan Topper that animist realism helps us discover how the spiritual practices are useful in healing from the generational trauma resulting from the unstable political history.

Keeping all these in mind, I have come to the conclusion that though these studies provide insights into new areas that may have been overlooked, the New Historicist perspective has not been used until now. I endeavour to scavenge out the deeper meanings of characterisation and plots based on the history of the author and that of Sierra Leone. My study will bring out the interconnectedness of history with the works of Aminatta Forna and how her personal history and the collective history of the Sierra Leoneans has led to the formation of vivid characters and plot of the novels.

Chapter 3: Theorising Transnationalism, New Historicism and Africanity

Diversity is the quintessence of human kind. The intermingling of populations different in culture, religion, history, background, language etc. is the emblem ofglobalization. Thus, globalization has also led to hybridity. When we look at the concept of hybridity, there is acceptance of amalgamation of cultures, languages etc. But when we look at transnationalism, it is more of a transpose. While transnationals may seem to adapt seamlessly to the new land, they have a sense of belonging to their past. Despite being physically present in a different land, the mind hovers on the homeland. This sense of belonging and the reminisces of the past of the transnationals brings up the diasporic issue to the forefront. The diaspora talks about the avid strangeness, alienation and difficulty of adjustment in the host country. Thus, the dominant

ideology in third world alludes to concepts such as postcolonialism, migration, hybridity, alienation, transnationalism, memory, trauma etc. While the migration may be voluntary or involuntary, immigrants feel distant from their homeland whatsoever.

While dealing with the ordeal of the transnationals, one cannot ignore the history. When we go down in history, we may uncover the subconscious intentions of human traits and behaviour. According to Foucault, history is an interaction of discourses that establish an episteme, a dominant ideology. But texts sometimes reveal a resistance to the episteme, rather than reflect it. Through New Historicism, readers gain a better insight of how historical viewpoints are complicated and how they are filtered through our own epistemes. New Historicism has a wider scope since it is not dependent on only the recorded history but it also deals with the verbal history or the oral narratives.

The Transnational and post-colonial experience worldwide may seem similar in spirit but is different in character everywhere and in every individual. Personal traits subconsciously exhibit the social, cultural and historical milieu to which one has been subjugated to. Africanity, thus is not what Joseph Conrad depicts as in his work*The Heart of Darkness* but it is what unbiased African writers portray. African identity has often been mistaken to be as evil, barbaric, uncivilized and uncultured. But to understand Africanity, there is a need to look at their history and not to impose the dominant ideology of the biased thinkers. Post-colonial ideology will also help us to demystify and break the colonized mindset on Africanity.

Chapter 4: Contextualising Transnationalism, New Historicism in *The Devil that Danced on the Water*

The Devil that Danced on the Water(2002) is a memoir written by Aminatta Forna. It is a memoir of Aminatta's childhood as well as a memoir of her father Mohammad Forna's

execution. Forna after acquiring education at the US, came back to Sierra Leone to clear her father's name and prove his innocence. She goes on to take every possible step and stoops down to the grassroot level in order to find the truth. Through her endeavour the reader also gains an impetus that history is not just what is written or recorded, it is also what is untold and unheard but witnessed by many. The New Historicists viewpoint will open up thoughts about why the author is so much intrigued to take up an endeavour for truth. For this one cannot overlook author's background and history. It is what happened to her when she was 10 yrs old, when her father was executed that she lost her father and this incident impacted her so much that she couldn't believe the world-imposed impression that her father was a traitor. And therefore, she sought to find out the truth. She wrote "It was as though this terrible knowledge, of the lies and manipulation, the greed and the corruption, the fear and the violence had with me forever. So, this innocence is lost, what it feels like. The country had changed, I had changed- as for the past, it was irrevocably altered."

Forna being a transnational, her past, her history affects her so much that she isintrigued to go back and scavenge out the truth that had been buried by corruption all this time. Her troubled childhood and the subsequent switching of places could not take away the African identity away from her. Though she had a bitter childhood, she urges to return to her homeland.She indulges in interviewing the witnesses and the people who testified against her father. She went to an extreme extent to do so and gathered all the information she could. In doing so she also unveils the scars that civil war had upon the Sierra Leoneans which is the subject matter of many of her subsequent novels.

Aminatta Forna in all her novels uses history so as to draw a picture of the past, the present and also the proposed future. She tells us how war has affected the African lives the

most. Even post-war situation shows the mental trauma amongst them. She switches between the West African setting i.e. Sierra Leone and Croatia. She does so to bring out the transnational perspective on war, trauma and memory. She shares her experience of the civil war in Sierra Leone and also her trauma related to the death of her father with the overbearing truth that war and bloodshed cost the innocent their lives. Colonization had left deep mental, political and social scars on the subaltern Africans. But the civil war also deepened the trauma amongst them.

Chapter 5:Analysing and Demystifying Africanity in*AncestorStones*

In the *Ancestor Stones*(2006) she points out that how because of few ignorant people the humanity had to suffer and bear the cost of the civil war. Each and every novel has been framed around the narratives of the collective memory of her ancestors, her extended family and also the war-stricken people in West Africa. Therefore, memory acts a glue to bind the transnationals in the feeling of oneness and provides the readers with a lens to look into the past. This way the subaltern culture and identity get a new dimension when the readers know about their past it adds on to their composition of their own self, their own being. Aminatta Forna's*Ancestor Stones* published in 2006, unravels theperspective of women on war.The narrative involves the experiences of four women of the Kholifa family:Asana, Mary, Hawa, and Seray. These women have the same father, the rich man Gibril but different mothers. The polygynous family is the seat of complicity and chaos. Set in an unnamed country in West Africa, the four sisters express their outlook on African history and culture as well as on war. The novel spans a wide timeframe of almost 8 decades, which gives us a purview of the situation of women during the war time. Forna tells us some truth about the family dynamics and why the polygynous family exists in the society. It is not for the males

but for the convenience of the females the polygynous marriage is supported by the females. It is for the distribution of familial responsibilities and household chores that the females choose to have multiple co-wives. Thus, this novel also demystifies the colonial concept that African culture is evil. Here the polygynous family structure is a symbol of women empowerment and not a social evil as a westerner may think. Civil War brought havoc on the people of Sierra Leone and a great deal of insecurity on the women's part. It is the women who are under constant threat of rape and sexual assault and they are not even safe within their own homes. Such in depth analysis of the African society from the perspectives of these four women provides for the demystification of Africanity as we are able to decolonize the conceptions about the African society. The hopeless state of Sierra Leone is accounted by many but it is depicted in extreme detail by Aminatta Forna. She notes down even the minutest details to make the readers aware of the grave situation and feel and experience it themselves. This stunning novel is about stories of the past which have had a significant impact on the present especially on the African identity.

Chapter6: Colonialization and Identity: The Study of the Quest for Reclaiming Africanity in *The Memory of Love*

Just as the title suggests,*The Memory of Love*(2010) is about the longings of love and to be loved in the disrupted Sierra Leone. The politically disturbances induced PTSD in 99%of the Sierra Leonean population. The grave situation is manoeuvred by Dr. Adrian Lockheart, a British psychologist in a very traditional way as he has been taught by in his western education. Little does he know that his education fails him as a psychologist he faces some unanticipated problems with his patients.He then realizes that treating his patient's depression the usual way would not work, as they are non-verbal with sharing their grievances and only

want treatment in medication form. The need to challenge Eurocentric norms and view Africa with a non-biased perspective has been the aim of contemporary writers such as Aminatta Forna.The re-evaluation of African history is essential in exploring the effects of colonialism on identity, identity, culture and socio-political structures. The New Historicism viewpoint will help us understand why people behave in a peculiar way.It will also make us aware of the extent to which civil war has slaughtered them mentally. Aspects of trauma evident in Sierra Leoneans are the numbness, the fugue state and the dissociative relationships prevalent among them. The trauma embedded in their personality, in their thoughts, in their behaviour all point out that the political turmoil has led to disrupted body and mind. Violence has gone to the extremes so much so amputation of limbs was rampant. Deliberate amputation of limbs addedto the horrors of the war. The plight of the war is unimaginable and thus has numbedthe people to the very core. From the psychological perspective, healing from trauma can only happen when they agree to open their feelings to someone and let all the anguish out at once.

The post-colonial chaos is aggravated more by the authoritarian regimein Sierra Leone resulting in civil wars. In order to reclaim their own identityand heal from the past traumas, they must face the past. This novel is all about African history and culture and the survival of the people through all of the plight. The survival strategy at first was to subdue their tragedy within themselves but as time moves forward Dr. Adrian's patient Elias realizes the importance of moving out of the trauma and indulge in healing oneself so as to reclaim his identity. Other characters in the novel react to trauma in various forms but once they manifest to return their own self, they start to reclaim their own identity. Past may not be easily forgotten but to survive and lead a better life the characters need to evolve and uplift themselves out of the troublesome past.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

The purpose of the study would be to reveal the forgotten and silenced voice of the Africans. We will get a post-colonial, New Historicism as well as the Transnational perspective to the works of Aminatta Forna. This will add on to the present knowledge of the African culture and history and lead us to analyse better through the diasporic writer herself how it feels to be a witness and victim of the trauma associated to civil war. In the end of the proposed study, we will achieve a full dimensional view and it will solve the political, emotional, social, economic dilemmas related to African history.

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